

2000P22369WOUS  
Wolfgang OCHEM *et al.*  
Appl. No.: 10/613,016

### AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The text of all pending claims is set forth below. The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

#### Listing of Claims

1. - 20. (cancelled)

21. (new) A method for establishing communication links to and from access lines in an exchange of a switching system, the exchange comprising a number of subscriber access units, a central switching network, and a central controller, wherein each subscriber access unit has line termination units coupled to the access lines to connect to subscriber terminal equipment, and wherein the number of subscriber access units includes subscriber access units that are adjacent to one another and subscriber access units that are not adjacent to one another, the method comprising:

coupling the subscriber access units to one another;

coupling each subscriber access unit to the central controller, wherein the central controller is configured to establish communication links via the central switching unit;

establishing a first connection between access lines of line termination units without an involvement of the central switching unit directly in the subscriber access unit concerned when the line termination units belong to one and the same subscriber access unit, and between the subscriber access units, which are coupled to one another and are adjacent to one another, when the line termination units belong to adjacent subscriber access units; and

establishing a second connection between access lines of line termination units, which belong to subscriber access units that are not adjacent to one another, via one of trunk lines running directly between these subscriber access units and at least one other subscriber access unit, under control of the central controller, but without involvement of the central switching unit of the exchange.

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22. (new) The method of Claim 21, further comprising the steps of: transmitting both communication signals and control signals via said trunk lines between subscriber access units of said exchange.

23. (new) The method of Claim 21, further comprising determining in said central controller trunk lines to be used by a subscriber access unit for transmitting control signals to other subscriber access units of a same exchange, if said subscriber access unit is connected to a number of other subscriber access units via a number of trunk lines corresponding to a number of said other subscriber access units.

24. (new) The method of Claim 23, wherein said step of determining is performed in an event of overflow traffic.

25. (new) The method of claim 21, wherein said subscriber access units are also used for connecting transmission lines to or from other exchanges.